



Newsletter of the African Burial Ground & Five Points Archaeological Projects

# UPDATE

Summer 1999

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Assoc. Regional Administrator for  
the African Burial Ground.....13

*and more!*

## AFRICAN BURIAL GROUND JUNETEENTH CELEBRATION!

Sherrill D. Wilson, Ph.D.

"Juneteenth," June 19, 1999, marked the culmination of the five-year long African Burial Ground Commemorative Stamp Campaign. More than 150,500 signatures have been received by the Office of Public Education & Interpretation (OPEI) from individuals, groups, religious and secular institutions and organizations, from 44 states and 40 countries abroad (see page 9).

The campaign was launched at one of the last meetings of the now disbanded Federal Steering Committee (FSC) for the African Burial Ground in 1994. The FSC was comprised of members from the New York African descendant community and professionals who advised the U.S. General Services Administration (GSA), regarding the African Burial Ground Project. The Committee served a two year tenure, from 1992 - 1994. The campaign to have the U.S. Postal Service issue a stamp to commemorate the African Burial Ground and those interred there, was the "brain child" of former FSC member Richard Brown, a retired postal employee. OPEI Public Educator, Marie-Alice Devieux, has served as the coordinator for the Commemorative Stamp campaign for the past five years.

During this five-year campaign, the U.S. Postal Service has *twice* rejected the petitions for the issuance of a stamp to commemorate the African Burial Ground (see highlights of events related to the stamp petition campaign page 8).

*(Continued on page 8)*

"Whether our dream (of an African Burial Ground commemorative stamp) is realized or otherwise, we can be assured within ourselves, that our cause is a just and deserving one for the ancestors, ourselves, and this nation as a whole."

----- Richard Brown (1995)

## ▶▶▶ LETTERS TO THE EDITOR ▶▶▶

### Student's Feedback

Dear Ms. Devieux,  
Thank you for the lecture/presentation of the African Burial Ground. The students were very impressed, but most of all they learned more about the project. Enclosed are letters written by them as testament to this wonderful experience

Cheryl Miller  
EBC High School/Bushwick  
Brooklyn, NY

...Your presentation of the African Burial Ground was excellent. You were a great representative for the Office of Public Education and Interpretation of the African Burial Ground. You are well educated about the Burial Ground and well spoken. The best thing I liked about the presentation was the slide show. It gave me a lot of information that I did not know before. The one question that I was thinking about was, why is the African Burial Ground so far from the office where you work at? I think people from all different places should come and see the African Burial Ground and learn more about our ancestors. I thank you for letting me extend my knowledge about my ancestors by coming to the African Burial Ground. The Way Out Is Back Through MAAFA....

Sincerely,  
Stephanie Dunn  
Brooklyn, NY

Hi, my name is Genovee Parrata and I'm a student from EBC Bushwick H.S. I would like to join as an intern because I think that helping other people to learn about the remains of other people and maybe even their ancestors is something very fun to do. I also think that while teaching someone you can learn new things from the research and studies or even from the people themselves. Having to become an intern is a great opportunity to go out and teach other people or kids the things that I've learned from the many things that I've been taught. Thank you for your time and your cooperation.

Genovee Parrata  
Brooklyn, NY

[ed. note: OPEI is currently accepting applications for high school and college internships].

### New York City Assembly and City Council Members Extend Their Support To Stamp Petition Drive

Dear Dr. Wilson,  
...I am writing to support the efforts in obtaining a commemorative stamp for the African Burial Ground and hope

that the efforts will continue until the battle is won. As you know, our ancestors played a key role in the development of America and the heritage of our people, dead or alive, should be preserved and commemorated as vigorously as all other Americans. It disturbs me highly when learning that the U.S. Postal Service is planning to issue a commemorative pane of stamps for Political Scandal Murderers and refuse to do so for our ancestors whose graves were plundered and mostly gone undetected. The denial of a stamp for the African American Burial Ground underscores the moral and ethical problems of the legacy of this equality.

Please extend my warm regards to the honoree, Richard Brown, for his tenacity, commitment and dedication for his noble effort. June 19th is a day that all African Americans should be proud of and ready to be counted for their efforts in securing freedom for our people. As always, I support your efforts and encourage you not to give up the fight.

Sincerely,  
Aurelia Greene,  
Member of the Assembly

...I am writing to express my support for your well recognized efforts in petitioning the United States Postmaster General for a commemorative stamp honoring the New York City African Burial Ground. The work that the individuals and the organizations under your leadership have taken on is commendable. The fact that supporters have collected over 150,000 signatures from 39 countries and 42 states to campaign for a commemorative stamp is clear evidence of the strong and broad interest that the African Burial Ground commands. The historical nature and meaningful significance of this special site in Manhattan is a powerful and important part of New York City, and truly deserves to be recognized as such.

Best wishes for a successful awards ceremony on Saturday, June 19th! I regret that I will not be able to attend, but wish to extend my most sincere admiration to all those who have joined in your efforts.

Yours truly,  
Walter L. McCaffrey  
Council Member 26th District

**OPEI welcomes letters from our  
readers but reserves the right to  
edit for length or clarity.**

**Congratulations  
to OPEI's 2nd Annual  
Writing Competition Winners!!**

**High School Winners  
Short Story Category:**

First Place:  
HaJaar Johnson  
John Bowne H.S., Queens, N.Y.

Second Place:  
James Carter  
Frederick Douglas Academy, N.Y.

Third Place:  
Helen Galindo  
Dickinson H.S., Jersey City, N.J.

**Poetry Category:**

First Place:  
Jamilah Rashid  
LaGuardia H.S., N.Y.

Second Place:  
Sydney Rowe  
Frederick Douglas Academy, N.Y.

Third Place:  
Nneka Lundy  
Frederick Douglas Academy, N.Y.

Fourth Place:  
Leeani Garcia  
Seward Park H.S., N.Y.

**Elementary and Middle  
School Winners**

**Poetry Category:**

First Place:  
Monifa S. Rayson  
Roberto Clemente - P.S. 13  
Brooklyn, N.Y.

Second Place:  
Jaymee Frole  
Northeast School, Montclair, N.J.

Third Place:  
Kimiko Greenidge  
P.S. 75, Bronx, N.Y.

Fourth Place:  
Wallangely Ovengo  
P.S. 75, Bronx, N.Y.

Fifth Place:  
Michael Budd  
Northeast School, Montclair, N.J.

**Due to the length of many of the winning entries, second and third place high school winners in the short story category and winning elementary and middle school poetry will appear in the Fall issue of *Update*.**



**Contest Judges**

1. Miriam B. Francis, Former member  
African Burial Ground  
Federal Steering Committee
2. Christopher Moore, Schomburg Center  
for Research in Black Culture
3. Dr. Lee Baker, Anthropologist  
Columbia University
4. Barbara Muniz, President  
Black American Roots
5. Phyllis Murray, Librarian  
P.S. 75, Bronx, New York
6. Ayo Harrington, Friends of the  
African Burial Ground
7. Cynthia Copeland, Educational Coordinator  
New York Historical Society
8. Dr. Martia Goodson, Assoc. Professor  
Black and Latino Studies, Baruch College
9. Sharon Dennis Wyeth, Author
10. Dr. Sherrill D. Wilson, Director OPEI

## 1999 African Burial Ground Writing Competition Winners: Short Story Category

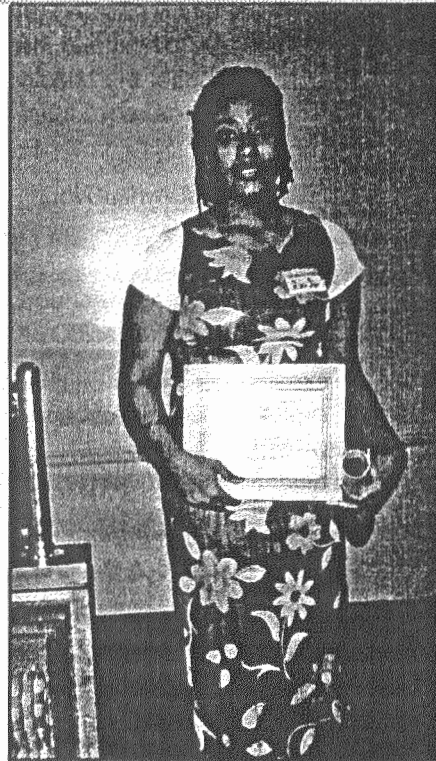
First Place  
High School Winner

### Hagar's Last Day

by HaaJar Johnson  
John Bowne High School  
Queens, N.Y.

I am the soul of a slave woman, with a message. I cannot speak. I am dead. Yet, I do have a voice in which to scream at my oppressors, their unjust rights, their malice, and the cage that they threw my life into. My power lies in something that is hidden during our whole lives only to be our sole physical possession in death. My bones tell the story that would be erased by time, life and new growth. My pain, my tears, my life and death are all seen in the dusty mirror of my skeleton. My enslaver's intense evil and blood lust which might be smeared by decades of rain is kept intact by the dismemberment of my husband's bones and the bullet snuggled tight within my rib cage.

Listen to the story my bones tell and allow yourself to selflessly feel my pain. Imagine yourself drying each tear that I cried alone, perhaps in a barn's stall, in a cotton field, above a slave auctions platform, or perhaps in a plantation's kitchen while cooking onions. Make my life worthwhile, take it as a message of pain that it is, learn from it, make it a part of you, let it marinate then let me go, forget my name but let my pain and their



HaaJar Johnson  
Photo credit: Alif Williams

hate stay with you as an example and warning. If you never forget my tears their pain will disappear. Here's my story:

I'll never forget the way the house glowed with the setting sun. The sun made our small wooden cabin look like an enchanted palace. With the glow of the sun the missing pieces of wood, the broken windows and rusty hinges, seemed to all disappear. I had just finished working for the day and my hands were sore. I looked down at my sturdy hands and realized they clearly reflected my life. They were a pair of weary, broken down and

rough hands. But the setting sun made them glow and shimmer. I almost didn't notice the wrinkles and cuts on them from working all day cleaning the Jones' laundry and cooking their supper. I was in a good mood, which was rare. I guess perhaps I had reached that breaking point that folks sometimes reached. That point where you just don't care no more and you find a sort of freedom in your soul.

My children, little Lazurus and his sister May, were sitting in front of my house playing idly in the dirt. They were making mud pies, smiling as if they didn't have a care in the world. I smiled at the sight but slowly my smile faded as I realized something was wrong with this picture. My private freedom ended when I faced reality with the setting of the sun. "Get now! Get's getting, ya'll!!!! Now, ya'll know ya'll gotta be home before da boogie man get ya!!, Now get!!", I yelled, waving my hands frantically so that they'd hurry along.

The streets were slowly emptying. There would be ten more minutes until our town, Five Points, would become a temporary ghost town. We colored folk had a curfew. Anyone out after sunset could be beaten even killed by whites. A thought entered my head: perhaps tonight ghosts would wander the streets with their white hoods and

long sheets. I shivered at the thought and slowly walked home to greet my love.

I walked slowly praying that I would find him the same man I married, the strong, prideful and unrelenting warrior. Not the shell of a man that our world's circumstances were slowly pushing him to be. As I walked towards the door I pictured myself wrapping myself in his arms and letting him burden me with his harsh reality and then I'd do the same until we both were cleansed and strong enough to see another day. I went inside. There were maybe five minutes until sunset. The house was empty.

*I stood still and silent for a moment.* I shook my head to destroy the ideas running through my mind. Slowly I walked back outside of my home and stood before the door awaiting my husband. Anyone passing by would have said I looked beautiful and glowing as I stood there against the setting sun. All I saw was Time laughing at me as he sped up his pace during the one time I wanted him to take his time. I just stood there with the sun setting, time passing, a breeze pushing my skirts and my soul dying. When the sun set I knew I'd lost him.

It was now ten minutes after sunset and it was dark, darker than I'd ever seen a night. When I heard the horses I was surprised. I had forgotten I could still hear, I had forgotten I was still alive. The horses stopped in front of my home. I still stood still. Four white men jumped off of the wagon. They laughed and joked with one another, well at least their mouths did, as they went to retrieve something from the wagon's back. The way they joked, their camaraderie was so enticing

that I wanted to laugh with them until I saw the joke being pulled from their wagon. My love's body was pulled then dragged toward my home, toward me and I truly died. I could hardly recognize his form, he had been burned, beaten and perhaps more just because he was out after sunset. He trembled a little. How he could still be alive was amazing. It looked as if he had told death to wait until he could tell me goodbye. He couldn't get the words out, he just looked at me and I understood. I also understood I would also die this night.

"Here's your Nigga boy, we found him in the streets doin' what he says was prayin'. Well it weren't Christian and ya'll Niggaz know ya'll don't be out after dark, so me and the fella's thought we'd teach this boy a lesson. Well I happen to think he got the idea, right Tom", said one. "Dat's right, Jim", said another and they all started laughing. They had the nerve to pray to their god and kill a man for doing the same. My husband was killed for the one thing that kept him whole in the prison we were forced to call home, his practice of Islam.

It seemed I had been waiting for this moment to let go of all my fury. When my love let go of his last breath I screamed a shrill, bloody scream and clawed my lifetime of frustration and oppression on any one of the four smiling faces before me. I fought them for their hate, their hurt, their hunger for power, their lies, their aggression, their evilness and their need to keep pushing my people down, we can't go down no further. I let all my pain and the pain I held for my people out.

When I felt my arm being snatched and twisted out of its socket I did

not cry. When I was punched and blood trickled down my chin I did not scream. I saw their punishment, their hell etched in their hateful faces and bloody hands. I just let my soul slowly find its freedom. I realized they would kill me and my whole life would die. I did not feel the bullet ripping into my flesh and sitting in my rib cage. I only saw the sun setting...The sun setting?! I looked closer as I teetered half in one world half in another. It was not the sun giving off such a brilliant glow but my love floating above the snarling, bloody smiles of our killers. He was in his original glow and beauty and I reached for him. Before I took his hand I took one last look at my children sitting at our cabin's door. Tears streamed down their faces, my babies, two flowers wilted by the setting of the sun.

I then looked back at the four men and a people who had brought my family to their land set a stage and forced them into the most dramatic and horrific roles, watching as they agonized, never ending the story or pausing the play. I looked into their eyes and they saw it, the deep natural but scary truth. They shivered in fright crossing themselves. I was about to voice my newfound knowledge when one lifted the rifle whose bullet lay within my weary body, and brought it down heavily breaking my face into pieces. Silencing a truth never to be spoken.

My body died that night but my soul floated with my love. Both of us in our original beautiful state, glowing brightly, like a sunset.

I am the soul of a slave woman and that was my story.





# 1999 African Burial Ground Writing Competition Winners: Poetry Category



Jamilah Rashid  
Photo credit: Emily L. Brown

First Place  
High School Winner

## "Ancestors of the Past"

by Jamilah Rhashid  
LaGuardia High School  
New York, N.Y.

Ancestors of the Past  
You have not been Forgotten  
The remains of the bones in the Coffins  
Is the remains of your historical Endeavor

History has come into a Halt  
A chapter Missing

A clear picture races Through  
Chained

Held in Captivity  
Identity taken Away

Enslaved Identity brought Upon

Once called African  
Changed into Negro, Slave  
Auctioned

Working from sun up to sun Down

Ancestors of the Past  
Roots of culture have stayed with You  
Passed down to your Descendants  
Your dances and Traditions  
Names and Religions  
Your courage and Strength  
Gets recognition

The Burial  
Brings Upon  
Sankofa Enlightenment

Ancestors of the Past  
Present and Future Descendants  
Spirit and Soul

Together

Memorial  
Reburial  
Change

May you rest in the land that you built Up



Second Place  
High School Winner

## "Why?"

by Sydney Rowe  
Frederick Douglas Academy  
New York, N.Y.

*When they buried my ancestors they buried  
them deep*

*Nobody knew that maybe kings and queens were  
there, so the men dug them up while they were sleep  
Their bones were intact so they could not react  
But they did and the graves were revealed  
Kings and queens were swallowed in the earth  
and the crane removed the dirt*

*I heard my ancestors cry because they had awoke  
When the men looked at what they saw none  
of them spoke*

*Buried in a place so long that was theirs  
They were about to take it away like they didn't care  
Again I heard my ancestors cry and I asked  
my self why?*

*Politicians, friends, family protested and put up  
a fight*

*They only did what they felt was right  
The men carried on and knew it was wrong  
But went along and kept singing the same song*

**"Why?"**

by Sydney Rowe

(Continued)

*The men heard the spirits of kids, teachers,  
preachers, scholars  
They thought and realized what they had done  
and backed up to the curb  
They wanted to build something over a place where  
my ancestors rested in peace  
They say they didn't know anything about the  
deceased  
When the men resisted my ancestors went to sleep  
For the burial ground which was theirs they  
could keep  
Nothing was going to be built on their grounds  
The men couldn't say or do anything,  
not even a sound*

*God worked in a mysterious way  
See what happens when you pray*



**Third Place  
High School Winner**

**"African Burial Ground"**

by Nneka Lundy  
Frederick Douglas Academy  
New York, N.Y.

*We are all one, both slave and free  
Unified by blood, despised in life, and segregated  
in death.  
We tell the story of the days of old with our flesh.  
Generations lie here,  
young as well as old.  
Mournings and blessings have been placed upon us  
as we entered the promised land.  
As we lie in eternal rest from the master's whip,  
from the hatred of those not of our people,  
from the pains of our former life.*

Hundreds of bodies lie here,  
their presence can not be denied  
nor tarnished as some mistake of a constructor.  
On our bodies we built this nation,  
but no structure could hide our legacy.  
We shall be known throughout the world,  
not as an error of a builder,  
but as a glorious people  
with histories, and achievements, and honor.

Hundreds of bodies lie here,  
rejoicing with the Creator.  
Let the world know:  
Africans are buried in this ground.



**Fourth Place  
High School Winner**

**"Untitled"**

by Leeani Garcia  
Seward Park High School  
New York, N.Y.



Our disappearance no longer lies  
in the text book of history under  
the category of slavery.

We lived at a time when leashes, whips,  
welts and belts were the  
ultimate fashion. Having children  
riding slaves as horses for satisfaction.  
Forced migration lead to  
solitude and miscommunication.

Apologies for all the deceit.  
Scars that are carved in concrete.  
Never forget those you choose to mistreat.

Astonished by the thought of separation  
but our discovery brought back  
the life and spirit of a forgotten nation.  
Washing away scars untold.  
Our brave hearts gave more than what was stolen  
It was the Sankofa that kept us going.



## Juneteenth Celebration (Continued from page 1)

Despite the rejections, volunteers of the Commemorative Stamp Committee increased their efforts in collecting signatures. Their new goal was to support, not just one stamp, but a whole series of commemorative stamps which would depict the various labor and trade in which 18th century Africans were engaged. The volunteer committee was committed to collecting signatures which would demonstrate the worldwide interest in the New York African Burial Ground.

The petitions submitted were signed by individuals from four year old Headstart students to senior citizens in their nineties. These signatures affirm that the landmarked 18th century New York African Burial Ground is recognized locally, nationally and internationally as the sacred and treasured "final resting place" for an estimated 10,000 - 20,000 18th century enslaved and free African New Yorkers.

The Juneteenth celebration honored Richard Brown with a *Noel Pointer Award* for "extraordinary dedication to the ancestors and descendants of the New York African Burial Ground and the African Burial Ground Project." Mr. Brown single-handedly collected more than 10,000 petition signatures. Sixty-eight additional awardees were honored with a *Richard Brown Award* for "extraordinary efforts on behalf of the African Burial Ground Commemorative Stamp Campaign."

The commemorative stamp award ceremony, held at 6 World Trade Center office, was attended by nearly 200 individuals. The keynote speaker was New York City Councilman Bill Perkins. Other guest speakers included: GSA's newly appointed Associate Regional Administrator for the African Burial Ground, Ron Law; Adunni Oshupa Tabasi, former FSC Member, and Ayo Harrington, Chair of Friends of the African Burial Ground. The Great Day Chorale, directed by Louvinia Pointer, mother of the late Noel Pointer, Sr., performed several gospel spirituals, and drummer Babatunde Ayansemi offered tribute to the ancestors at the African Burial Ground site and during the celebration.

Stamp petitions will be submitted to the postal service in July 1999. *The public is urged to immediately submit all outstanding petitions to the OPEI.* Please continue to write and to continue to encourage local and national legislative representatives to write letters of support to the Citizen's Stamp Advisory Committee or to William J. Henderson, Postmaster General at 475 L'Enfant Plaza S.W., Washington, D.C.20260.

## HIGHLIGHTS OF THE AFRICAN BURIAL GROUND STAMP PETITION CAMPAIGN

Compiled by Marie Alice Devieux

- |           |  |
|-----------|--|
| 1994      | Richard Brown proposes to African Burial Ground Federal Steering Committee (FSC) an idea for an African Burial Ground Commemorative Stamp. Suggestion is endorsed by the Committee as an FSC goal. He designs a petition for the public to sign and forward to the Postmaster General.   |
| June 1994 | OPEI begins to assist Richard Brown with the collection of signatures on petitions.  |
| July 1994 | Brown speaks with Robin Jones, a post office rep. who tells him petitions should be sent by Sept 1 to be considered for Oct. Citizens' Stamp Advisory Committee (CSAC) meeting. Letters are sent to Congressional Black Caucus and other public officials signed by Howard Dodson. Brown begins to personally visit representatives. OPEI collects signatures at public events and during presentations.   |
| Aug. 1994 | Approximately 20,000 signatures from 30 states and 7 countries abroad are compiled and sent, with a letter signed by Howard Dodson, to CSAC.   |
| Oct. 1994 | Congressman Earl F. Hilliard, 7th District in Alabama sends first letter of support from an elected official to CSAC.  |
| Feb. 1995 | Brown receives letter signed by Cindy Tackett for James C. Tolbert, Jr., Stamp Mgr. stating the ABG stamp was not recommended for issuance and that he may resubmit a proposal in one year. Brown and OPEI set a goal of collecting 100,000 signatures in support of the commemorative stamp.  |
| Nov. 1995 | Brown, Leona Shuler Sellers, an OPEI volunteer, and Deborah Wright, OPEI Field Administrator, deliver the second proposal including an additional 65,000 signatures from 40 states and 16 countries abroad to CSAC. The proposal included articles from the L.A. Times, N.Y. Times, Massachusetts Magazine, Archaeology Magazine and letters of support from 15 city, state, and federal public officials. In total, collected and delivered signatures numbering over 85,000 to CSAC. |

(cont. on page 12)







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## DID YOU KNOW?

- ✓ Over **150,000 signatures** have been collected for an African Burial Ground Commemorative Stamp Series?
- ✓ Supporters from **40 countries** have signed petitions for the stamp ? (see below).
- ✓ **44 U.S. States** have shown their support through signatures?
- ✓ States without signature representation are **Montana, Nebraska, North Dakota, Utah, Vermont, Wyoming.**

### CARIBBEAN

### AFRICA

### EUROPE

### SO. AMERICA

### OTHER REGIONS

Puerto Rico  
Aruba  
Bahamas  
Jamaica  
St. Lucia  
Trinidad  
St. Croix

Ghana  
Senegal  
Tanzania  
Kenya  
Ethiopia  
Zambia  
Cameroon  
Mali  
Madagascar  
Burundi  
Equatorial  
Guinea  
Rwanda  
Sierra Leone  
Sudan  
Niger  
Sao Tome  
Congo

England  
France  
Germany  
Italy  
Denmark  
Switzerland  
Belgium  
Holland  
Spain  
Liechtenstein

Brazil

Canada  
Israel  
Australia  
Peoples Republic  
of China  
Japan



**SANKOFA**

"go back and fetch it"

## THE RICHARD BROWN AWARD

Given to individuals or groups for extraordinary efforts in the  
African Burial Ground Commemorative Stamp Campaign

Compiled by Marie-Alice Devieux

### Individuals

Amma Asantewaa  
Bronx, NY

Lorraine Bullock  
New Haven, CT

Lesley Custus  
Chicago, IL

Virginia Fears  
Los Angeles, CA

Curtis Fields  
Teaneck, NJ

Miriam Francis  
Brooklyn, NY

Verna M. Francis  
Brooklyn, NY

Maureen Spencer Forrest  
Baldwin, NY

Raenice (Cookie) Goode  
Charlotte, NC

Annette Harewood  
Brooklyn, NY

Ethel W. Higgins  
Bronx, NY

Henry Jackson  
Bronx, NY

Alvin Jones  
Warrensville Hts., OH

Grace F. Jones  
Warrensville Hts. OH

Janice C. Jones  
San Leandro, CA

Marvis LaVerne Jones  
Memphis, TN

Lillian Lewis  
Gary, IN

Thomas Lucas  
Brooklyn, NY

Patricia H. Lytle  
Bronx, NY

Phyllis Mahmoud  
Gary, IN

Sadye M. Pierce  
Philadelphia, PA

Mattie Porter  
Warrensville Hts., OH

Shelly Rice  
Bronx, NY

Virginia Robinson  
New York, NY

Leona Shuler  
New York, NY

Irving W. Underwood  
Brooklyn, NY

Sadie Vaughn  
Minneapolis, MN

### Individuals Representing Schools, Universities and Youth Groups

Lois Webber & Emma Fleming  
Archbishop Carroll H.S.  
Washington DC

Gloria D. Trentham  
Springfield Gardens H.S.  
Springfield Gardens, NY

Bette Davis  
Clara Barton H.S. Brooklyn, NY

Prof. Yvonne V. Jones &  
Prof. Lorna Littleway  
University of Louisville  
Louisville, KY

Prof. Charlene Snowden  
Medgar Evers College  
Brooklyn, NY

Phyllis Murray  
P.S 75, Bronx, NY

Edith Donaldson,  
Thirteenth Avenue School  
Newark, NJ

Gwen Parker Ames, Ed.D  
Cushite Rites of Passage  
New York, NY

Gladys Scott-Fuchs &  
Rev. George H. Murray  
Mt. Pisgah Christian Academy  
Brooklyn, NY

Rhondea Williams  
Sisters United Newark, NJ



Honoree Richard Brown (center) surrounded by awardees. Photo credit: Chadra D. Pittman

### Individuals Representing Organizations & Churches

Delores Sadler, Paulette Caldwell, & Deborah Nance  
St. Pauls Community Baptist Church, Brooklyn, NY  
Rev. Johnny Ray Youngblood

Joni Nash & Dr. Martia Goodson  
Abyssinian Baptist Church  
New York, NY  
Rev. Calvin Butts

John Adams  
National Alliance of Postal and Federal Employees  
Wendy Kelly, New York, NY  
James McGee, President  
Washington, DC

Selvena L. Mosely, President  
Union of Black Episcopalians  
St. Phillip's Church Bklyn., NY  
Rev. Alonzo Pruitt

John Logan  
African American Genealogy Group Philadelphia, PA  
Grace Lindsey, President

Elaine Allman  
Local 1180 AFL-CIO  
New York, NY  
Arthur Cheliotas, President

Roberta Winfield  
Goodwill Industries of Greater New York  
Astoria, NY  
Karen Means, Vice-President

Diane E. Toppin, President  
Bronx Club of the National Assoc. of Negro Business & Prof. Women's Clubs, Inc.,  
Bronx, NY

Dorothy Thompkins  
M.L. King Democratic Club  
New York, NY

Chairman V-DYKE  
New Cassel Community  
Westbury, NY

### Awards Ceremony Organizers

Michaela Alleyne  
Judy Claybourne  
Martia Goodson  
Morenike Olabunmi  
Gladys Scott-Fuchs  
Yvette Hibbert Taylor  
Patricia Willis

### African Burial Ground Stamp Committee Members (1996-1999)

O. Diane Adebowale  
Michaela Alleyne  
Rhonda Best  
Sylvia Bowens  
Judy Claybourne  
Dee Dee Dailey  
Martia Goodson  
Laura Limuli  
T. Rasul Murray  
Morenike Olabunmi  
Gladys Scott-Fuchs  
Leona Shuler  
Yvette Hibbert Taylor  
Augustus Temple III  
Patricia Willis

**CONGRATULATIONS!**



## African Burial Ground Update

(Continued from page 8)

### □ Highlights of the Stamp Petition Campaign (cont.)

**January 1996** OPEI misinformed that CSAC will not meet due to severe northeastern blizzards, postponing meeting to April 26, 1996. OPEI continues to assist Brown in collecting signatures until April 1, 1996.

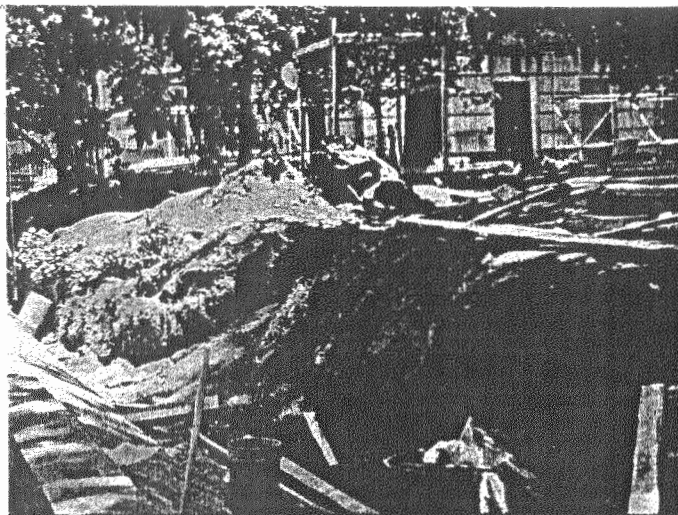
**March 1996** Number of signatures collected exceeds 100,000

**April 1996** OPEI is informed that CSAC meeting in January was held later that month and that the ABG Commemorative Stamp proposal was again rejected at that meeting.

□ **New GSA Leadership Appointed to the African Burial Ground Project.** Lisa Wager, former General Services Administration (GSA) appointed, "Executive Director" of the African Burial Ground Project has been relieved of duties related to the African Burial Ground Project. This occurred after a heated public hearing held at the Schomburg Center by Friends of the African Burial Ground, headed by Ayo Harrington on Saturday, April 17, 1999. Wager and GSA were charged with a lack of sensitivity and expertise in dealing with critical issues affecting the landmark 18th century site. Many attendees at the hearing viewed Wager's title of "Executive Director" as an attempt to exercise control over the project's leadership: Dr. Michael L. Blakey, Project and Scientific Director, Dr. Sherrill D. Wilson, OPEI Director and Peggy King Jorde, Project Executive for Memorialization.

In response to accusations that GSA has failed to submit 19 quarterly reports to signatories of the African Burial Ground's Memorandum of Agreement (MOA), between 1992-1999, Thurman Davis, Deputy Administrator of the GSA admitted that GSA "goofed" regarding the submission of these reports. Signatories of the MOA are the GSA, New York City's Landmarks and Preservation Commission (LPC) and the Washington, D.C. based National Advisory Council.

New GSA leadership, which includes William R. Lawson, Deputy Regional Administrator for Region 2, and Ronald Law, Associate Administrator for the African Burial Ground Project (see pages 12-13) are looking into the alleged violations of the Memorandum of Agreement. --- **S.D.W.**



The northwest area of City Hall Park where human remains were unearthed. Photo credit: Emilyn L. Brown

□ **Burials continue to be unearthed from City Hall Park.** Questions are being raised about City Hall Park's landmark status, and its failure to prevent the excavation of burials in the area. In February of 1999, two sets of remains were unearthed at Chambers Street near Broadway. In May of 1999, fragmented remains of approximately twenty people were recovered on Chambers near Centre Streets. This past June, eleven intact remains were unearthed near the Brooklyn Bridge subway stop, only 6 inches below the sidewalk. (see Update Vol. 2, No. 10 for a brief history of other skeletal recoveries).

Some of the remains recovered from the Park have already been transferred to Brooklyn College under the direction of Dr. Arthur Bankoff. Despite previous requests from the Landmarks Preservation Commission, Dr. Michael L. Blakey, Scientific Director of the African Burial Ground Project, has maintained his reluctance to analyze the remains unless some type of community forum is held. Meanwhile, workmen continue to dig. --- **E.B.**

### OPEI Calendar of Saturday Events

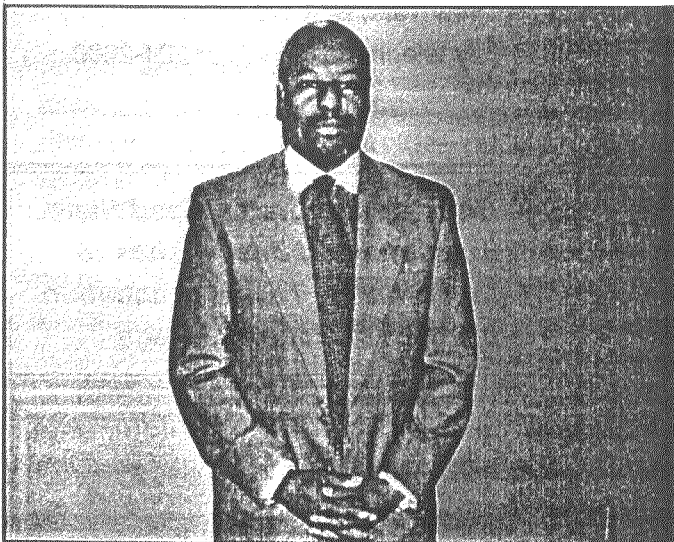
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|--|--|
| ◆ Sat., July 24, 1999<br>Summer Educators Symposium<br>11:00-5:00 p.m.             | ◆ Sat., Oct. 16, 1999<br>Volunteer Training<br>12:00-5:00 p.m.       |
| ◆ Sat., Aug. 21, 1999<br>OPEI Open to the Public<br>12:00 - 5:00 p.m.              | ◆ Sat., Nov. 20, 1999<br>Fall Educators Symposium<br>11:00-5:00 p.m. |
| ◆ Sat., Sept. 18, 1999<br>African Burial Ground Film Festival<br>12:00 - 5:00 p.m. | ◆ Sat., Dec. 18, 1999<br>Kwanzaa Film Festival<br>12:00 - 5:00 p.m.  |

PLEASE CALL TO CONFIRM TIMES AND TO  
MAKE RESERVATIONS (212) 432-5707



## Ronald Law Named to Lead G.S.A.'s African Burial Ground Project

Renee' Miscione



Ronald Law, recent appointee to the position of Associate Regional Administrator for the African Burial Ground Project  
Photo credit: Dr. Sherrill D. Wilson

The U.S. General Services Administration has announced the appointment of Ronald Law as its chief executive for the agency's multifaceted African Burial Ground Project. Mr. Law brings extensive public administration and public affairs experience to his new position as Associate Regional Administrator for the African Burial Ground.

"We are extremely pleased to have Ron's considerable expertise and ability added to this Project," stated GSA Regional Administrator Tom Ryan. "Under his direction, GSA will be able to move forward in an effective and energetic manner that will meet the concerns of the community while producing a world class project."

A graduate of the Harvard University John F. Kennedy School of Government, Mr. Law's experience includes service in the following capacities: Chief of Staff for New York City Deputy Mayor Rudy Washington; Regional Director for Senator Daniel Patrick Moynihan; and Director of the Crisis Prevention Unit for the Institute for Student Achievement. In other professional endeavors, Mr. Law served as an aide to

Bishop Desmond Tutu during his visit to the United States in 1986. He was also the Director of Logistics in New York State for the 1986 nationwide Hands Across America event. Mr. Law served on the Board of Directors of the Center for the City and the Boy's Choir of Harlem.

GSA's \$15 million African Burial Ground Project has three primary components. Scientific research is currently being conducted at Howard University under the direction of Dr. Michael Blakey, the project's Scientific Director. Public education and interpretation, provided through the Office of Public Education and Interpretation (OPEI) at 6 World Trade Center, under the direction of Dr. Sherrill Wilson; and the project's Memorialization efforts are coordinated by Peggy King Jorde. The latter two components include the coordination of two national design competitions, one for an Interpretive Center that will tell about the lives of the 18th century African Americans buried in Lower Manhattan, and the other for an Exterior Memorial that will be located at the National Historic Landmark site.

Information about the African Burial Ground Project can be obtained on the Internet at <http://R2.gsa.gov/> (click on "Special Interest") or by calling GSA/Public Affairs (212) 264-0424.

◆\*◆

### *A Mini-Interview With Ron Law*

Emilyn L. Brown

**E.B.:** Please give us the specifics about what your title means in relation to the African Burial Ground Project?

**R.L.:** My official title is Associate Regional Administrator. Specific to the African Burial Ground, it is to work toward bringing this project to final closure, which means the building of the interpretive center, the memorialization, the reinterment of the human remains and the ceremony that goes with it. →



### **Mini-Interview (cont.)**

**E.B.:** How do you plan to interact with New York's African American community since they were instrumental in preserving this historic site?

**R.L.:** I'm still learning my way around the Project and I'm also learning all of the components, the consultants, GSA staff, the bidders for the interpretive center and exterior memorialization, as well as the community and elected officials. As we go through this information gathering process, I can't give a specific answer at this moment, but there will be some consultation with the community.

**E.B.:** Are there any specific issues related to the African Burial Ground Project that you would like to address or correct?

**R.L.:** I guess the issue I'd like to address is that this Project has been moving along slowly. The human remains were found in 1991 and it's something which I think needs to finally be brought to closure. We need a memorial, an interpretive center, reinterment and an educational learning center so that America can learn about Africans in the early part of American history.

**E.B.:** How do you answer critics who state that your appointment to this position is based on race?

**R.L.:** You will always have critics and naysayers. The intention of the African Burial Ground is to remember the contributions that African Americans have made to this country and there is valuable anthropological, scientific and cultural information that can be gained from this Project. My appointment is not based on race, and I will not engage in any discourse with anyone who suggests that my appointment was based on race.

**E.B.:** What are your long range goals for the Project?

**R.L.:** Closure. That's going to become my mantra. Whatever it takes to create a symbol that people can touch, feel and see which demonstrates the contributions that African Americans have made to this country is what I'm working towards.

To reach Ronald Law or William Lawson at the General Services Administration you may send letters to the following address:

U.S. General Services Administration  
Office of the Regional Administrator  
26 Federal Plaza, Room 1800  
New York, N.Y. 10009

To reach them by telephone call (212) 264-2600.



***OPEI's Director and Staff extend their congratulations and best wishes to Allison Manfra on her recent graduation from CUNY @ Hunter College***

### **SUMMER EDUCATORS SYMPOSIUM**

**Saturday, July 24, 1999**

**11:00 a.m. - 5:00 p.m.**

Join us for a day of workshops, film reviews, activities and resources for implementing the African Burial Ground and the Early African Presence into school curricula for Elementary and Middle School Educators.

**For reservations and information call, fax or write to:**

Office of Public Education & Interpretation  
of the  
African Burial Ground Project  
U.S. Custom House  
6 World Trade Center, Room 239  
New York, N.Y. 10048  
Telephone: (212) 432-5707  
Fax: (212) 432-5920

### **ARE YOU ON OUR MAILING LIST ?**

Please submit your name and/or corrections to:

OPEI, 6 World Trade Ctr.,  
U.S. Custom House, Rm. 239,  
New York, New York 10048

(212) 432-5707

(212) 432-5920

# OPEI'S SUMMER 1999 READING LIST

Compiled by Sherrill D. Wilson  
& Allison Manfra

Adeshote, Jeanette Davis.

Black Survival in White America: From Past History to the Next Century. Orange, N.J.: Bryant & Dillon, Pubs., 1995.

Amadiume, Ifi. Reinventing Africa: Matriarchy, Religion and Culture. N.Y.: Zed Books Ltd., 1997.

Baker, Lee D. From Savage to Negro: Anthropology and the Construction of Race 1896-1954. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1998.

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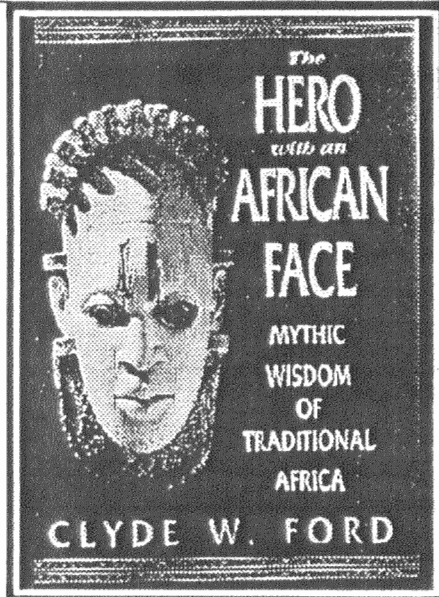
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Shipler, David K. A Country of Strangers: Blacks and Whites in America. N.Y.: Alfred A. Knopf, 1998.

Shange, Ntozake. If You Can Cook You Know God Can. Boston: Beacon Press, 1999.

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Tobin, Jacqueline & Raymond G. Dobard, Ph.D. Hidden in Plain View: A Secret Story of Quilts and the Underground Railroad. N.Y.: Doubleday, 1999.

Von Frank, Albert J. The Trials of Anthony Burns: Freedom & Slavery In Emerson's Boston. Cambridge: Harvard Univ. Press, 1998.

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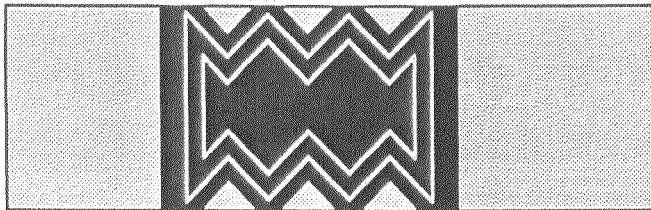
**QUESTIONS OR COMMENTS  
ABOUT THE  
AFRICAN BURIAL GROUND?**

**SEND E-MAIL TO:**

**[nyabg@worldnet.att.net](mailto:nyabg@worldnet.att.net)**

**IN THE NEXT ISSUE OF UPDATE:**

- ▼ **Winning High School Short Stories and Elementary and Middle School Poetry**
- ▼ **Archaeology Update**



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